



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FEDERAL WAY WOMAN SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IN PRISON FOR BANK FRAUD,
ID THEFT AND ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION**

Repeat Offender Used Stolen Mail, Information from Burglaries to Commit Fraud

ALICIA KATHLEEN CRUZ, aka ALICIA KATHLEEN ARMSTRONG, 26, of Federal Way, Washington was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in Seattle to five years in prison, five years of supervised release and \$33,117 in restitution for Bank Fraud, Felon in Possession of a Firearm, and Aggravated Identity Theft. CRUZ pleaded guilty May 19, 2008. At sentencing U.S. District Judge Thomas S. Zilly told her, "there is no question you affected many people's lives.... It is a crime that cries out for a long prison sentence."

According to records filed in the case, CRUZ had multiple arrests and committed multiple frauds between August 2007, and December 2007, involving the use of other people's personal identifying information. CRUZ had already been convicted in King County Superior Court in February 2007, of Identity Theft and Possession of Stolen Property, and was on probation at the time of many of the arrests. The litany of arrests and frauds is as follows:

August 17, 2007 – used stolen identity documents to open U.S. Bank account, deposit stolen or counterfeit checks, and withdraw funds. Drained money from victim's existing bank account.

September 17, 2007– arrested by Kent Police for possession of numerous stolen checks, check books and credit cards.

September 28, 2007 – arrested for passing a stolen check at Sam's Club in Renton.

November 6, 2007 – used a counterfeit check, and stolen identity to purchase an SUV from a Shoreline car dealer.

December 17, 2007 – used stolen identity to purchase a Cadillac from Puyallup car dealer.

On January 2, 2008, federal and local law enforcement officers served a search warrant on CRUZ's Federal Way apartment, and the moving van she had rented using a stolen identity. Police found a stolen Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun in the moving van, and a revolver and ammunition in CRUZ's purse. As a convicted felon, CRUZ was prohibited from possessing firearms. Investigators also found large quantities of stolen mail and counterfeit checks. CRUZ told investigators that she obtained personally identifying information from stolen mail and from associates who burglarized houses. CRUZ used the information to make counterfeit checks on her computer and which she used to defraud various banks and merchants. The loss associated with the scheme is estimated at more than \$36,000.

Special Assistant United States Attorney Johanna Vanderlee said in her sentencing memo that CRUZ's criminal history began as a juvenile and had continued almost without a break until her January 2008 arrest. "Perhaps most disturbing is Ms. Cruz's willingness to live the easy life by stealing the property and identities of others and by compromising their bank and credit accounts,"

Ms. Vanderlee wrote in her sentencing memo. As part of her prison term and supervised release period, CRUZ will undergo drug treatment.

CRUZ was prosecuted as part of the United States Attorney's Office Working Group on Identity Theft. Under federal law, those convicted of Aggravated Identity Theft face a mandatory two year prison sentence to be served following any sentence on an underlying crime such as Bank Fraud.

The case was investigated by Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General (SSA-OIG), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco & Explosives (ATF), the Federal Way Police Department and Renton Police Department.

The case was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Johanna Vanderlee. Ms. Vanderlee's position is funded by the Social Security Administration as a part of SSA's efforts to combat identity theft and Social Security fraud.

For additional information please contact Emily Langlie, Public Affairs Officer for the United States Attorney's Office, at (206) 553-4110.